good things don’t last (and life moves so fast)

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by urfav_bluescrunchie

Summary

“Shatel, I—“

“Iz—“

They both paused, Lyra letting out a shallow laugh as her head fell forward. “God, that was corny. Like something out of some cheesy coming of age movie.”

Ismene couldn’t say she disagreed.

“..You should go first,” Ismene gestured to the girl beside her, “it’s obviously been weighing you down a bit.” Ismene paused. “Assuming you deliberately followed me here.”

That caused whatever nervousness washing over Lyra to dissipate like a fresh spring rain. “I — Okay, first of all, I wouldn’t follow you. I’m not a guy. They don’t hesitate to fucking stalk a girl late at night. Totes not my thing.”

or

Lyra heard everything regarding Ismene’s argument wirh Shinku, and couldn’t help checking in on her.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

..Just like that, it was done.

A promise built on what Ismene thought was a mutual feeling; trust. She thought she could trust Shinku Kutsuki. Someone she met a mere.. What was it, two months ago? One? The days started to blend when she lost Dracul, so God only knows how long they'd actually been lost beneath rubble with no hopes of salvation. All they had was each other now— but how could Ismene have anyone if she couldn't trust the one person she thought could understand her?

Understand her grief.

Despite judging Shinku so much for what he had done with Molly, she can't help but acknowledge that she'd do the same. She doesn't blame him for that. What she does blame him for is betraying such a vulnerable, raw, human promise. Something almost sacred and a symbol of their time in the prison; metaphorically and literally.

It hurt to destroy the pin. It truly, truly did.

But how could she not?

Shinku destroyed his so easily, it was as if he put no thought into it at all. Just.. One and done.

He was no better than a murderer. No better than those who had given up so easily down here. Dracul. Alora. Takiko.

God, Takiko. That.. That was something to unpack later.

..How long would it take for Shinku to take someone else's life? Would it be planned days in advance, like Dracul, only to follow through with it in such a reckless manner that it resulted in Ismene's credulous retorts? Or, perhaps it'd be like Alora— a complete accident. A miserable, awful accident. Something that she'll have to carry with her for.. The rest of her life, really. Perhaps Shinku would stoop as low as Takiko did; framing the innocent to finally be seen for herself. He could kill someone everyone had put on a pedestal to bring peace to the self. Wouldn't that be ironic? Ending up like the very young girl you lead to her death? The one you despise so, so very much, yet truly you're no better?

..Ismene regrets every tray she had ever tossed on Uchiyama's face.

Shinku's pleas came out in desperate waves as she left his cell, shutting the door with a heavy enough slam to cause a bit of debris to fall from the ceiling. At this rate, she'd rather die from faulty concavity than the hands of Shinku Kutsuki.

She didn't know where she was going— just that she needed air. If only there were an escape from this damned prison; Ismene doesn't know how much longer she can be within his radius. Within anyone's radius, truly.

One step led to another, and eventually Ismene found herself in the library. A safe recluse where she could indulge in some classics and go back to the familiar world she had been in before prison life. Just feeling the hard covers and opening the pages to that ‘old-book-smell’ sent her over the moon. Not enough to rid herself of the bile in her mouth after Kutsuki’s actions, but.. enough.

Eventually she had settled on a copy of Macbeth, snickering to herself as she realized the irony of the book being held in a prison. Macbeth, empowered by three evil, evil witches to commit such murder and treason.. In a way, the entire situation of being ‘kept in jail for an eternity’ felt like a Greek tragedy; The three witches, Emilia, Mononeko, and to her not-so-surprised-surprise Wang, tempting Macbeth, the killers, to taking out their victims in hope of escape. The witches would only persuade them more— it was only a matter of time before another murder occurred.

Then Macbeth, The Blackened, would be murdered by Macduff, The Execution.

Ismene turned the page. How.. Coincidental. Surely they kept the book here on purpose? As some sort of.. commentary on their actions.

Of course, nobody else would ever realize that, and that’s okay. If she knew how the play would end, nothing would surprise her along the way. No further deaths will ever have her defending someone like she had Dracul and Kutsuki. Never again.

A knock coming from the door snapped her right out of the play she had become so engrossed in, tossing the book onto the small table beside her like it was fatal to the touch. If she became too absorbed, someone could find the perfect opening, and just—

“—Hey.” Lyra muttered, keeping only her head peering through the doorway. Ismene hates to admit it, but the relief that washed over her after seeing Shatel was.. unbearable. In the best way possible. After a minute of silence Lyra cleared her throat, peering her head a bit further in, causing the door to crack open just an inch more. “Can I come in? You uh, seemed pretty occupied.”

Ismene didn’t know what to say. For once in her life, she couldn’t come up with some quick-witted retort. She wanted to say no. To drive Shatel away, to hopefully never speak to her again, and ride out the rest of her prison life a lone wolf. Just.. wait until she was the last one standing. It’d be simpler that way. She wouldn’t have anyone to worry about, nobody to bring to her to the end and stress about whether they’re still alive the next morning.

And yet, she couldn’t say no. Somehow, some way, she couldn’t bring herself to make a sound that had become second nature.

“..Sure.” Ismene muttered, picking back up her copy of Macbeth and giving it a proper flipping through to find the page she had left off on.

Lyra entered cautiously— like a cat privy to the smallest of bangs— and closed the door with the gentlest of clicks. Each and every movement of hers was slow, as if she had thought this through in some sort of.. way. Like she intended on talking to her. Obviously she had, she

wouldn't have come to the library if that weren't the case, but.. Ismene couldn't shake the thought of her walking on eggshells. Shatel wasn't like that with her before.

Even grabbing, carrying, and placing her chair next to her own was done silently. Slowly. Ismene didn't even register that Lyra was beside her until she had sat in the chair, her perfume and the musk of cigarettes slowly overpowering the old-book-smell.

..Ismene can't say she hated it.

There was definitely some sort of awkwardness between them. Shatel wouldn't stop playing with the bracelets on her wrists. When she had gotten tired of those, she drummed her palms on her thighs. Then, when she had no other option, she fumbled her hands around in her jacket pocket, presumably looking for some sort of.. pill. To make whatever conversation she wanted to have easier.

She couldn't take it anymore as she put the book face-down onto her lap.

"Shatel, I—"

"Iz—"

They both paused, Lyra letting out a shallow laugh as her head fell forward. "God, that was corny. Like something out of some cheesy coming of age movie."

Ismene couldn't say she disagreed.

"..You should go first," Ismene gestured to the girl beside her, "it's obviously been weighing you down a bit." Ismene paused. "Assuming you deliberately followed me here."

That caused whatever nervousness washing over Lyra to dissipate like a fresh spring rain. "I — Okay, first of all, I wouldn't follow you. I'm not a guy. They don't hesitate to fucking stalk a girl late at night. Totes not my thing." Lyra shuddered at the thought. She shifted her chair to be in front of Ismene's own, forcing her to make eye contact. "..And, uh, second of all—" She fell silent, contemplating what would be the right way to go about it. Ismene could tell she eventually gave up. "—Fuck, I don't know how to really put this in a way that doesn't seem like I'm trying to like.. Pity-bang you, or something—"

"—Gross."

Lyra furrowed her brows. "..Are you okay?"

Ismene cursed whichever force brought Lyra here. She didn't want to do this here. Not now, not ever, really. Not.. How could she bring herself to confide in someone after that? After having her trust broken, despite defending him at every which moment she could? Like some sort of.. follower.

The air in the room felt a lot heavier than it did before. The books seemed more cluttered, the tables more skewed, and the prison itself a lot more claustrophobic.

Is it wrong of her to want to go home? Despite everything? Despite knowing that she belonged in some sort of cell to repent for a murder of her own?

If she were home, she'd have never met all of these people. Her life would be free of Shinku's influence. Free of Elias' bickering. Free of..

Shatel. Ismene bit down on the inside of her cheek.

Would she have wanted that? To have never met such an indignant character?

Lyra shifted in her seat, breaking eye contact and fixating on a certain shelf in the center of the room. "I just.. I heard you and Shinku. Since uhm, Y'know, Zee's room is so close and.." Every bit of silence made her wreathe around in her chair— crossing her legs, bouncing her knee, leaning against the backing— it was as if she could peer right into Ismene's head. Like she knew she wasn't okay, that she'd never be okay, and it'd be hard to ever open up to anyone again. "..And I uh, I— I guess I was worried, I dunno. Sue me." Lyra lifted her hands up as if she were surrendering.

In a way, she was.

She was surrendering her time to Ismene. She came to listen. To accept her grievances with open arms. To.. Tell her it's okay. That she's okay. That it's right of her to be mad. That she needn't worry anymore about such small, trivial matters, because she had Shatel. No, Lyra.

The implications brought a flush to her cheeks. She had never been more thankful for the prison's dim lighting than now. Instead of accepting such a sanctuary with open arms, instead of just.. relishing in the fact that someone cared, Ismene put her defenses up, opting to deflect the conversation off of her as much as she could. She could stay safe that way.

Even if she was certain that Shatel wouldn't hurt her. Such blind trust.. A fatal flaw. A moth to a flame. A desperate dog to the discarded food on the floor, more focused on its hunger than the chocolatey-flavor lacing its mouth.

"How much did you hear?" A simple question.

Lyra seemed to understand, given the smile she shot her.

"Not much. Only his little bitches and moans as you ran off."

Ismene sighed, long and slow, exhaling Shatel's second-hand-lingering-smoke as if she were a cigarette of her own. Perhaps she should get into smoking. If the smell was really as relieving as Lyra's own, she can see how intoxicating it could get.

"Good— Good. That would've.. been awfully embarrassing if you heard more." Ismene paused, glancing back at her Macbeth book. If she had established Shinku as a future Macbeth, would that make her his Banquo? Someone who warned him of the risks the witches brought, only to be murdered in the end? Frustration laced her tone, chastising herself. "God, I can't believe I was such.. An idiot. A stupid, reckless, naïve idiot."

Lyra looked back at her. Ismene froze, her grimace fading into a more neutral frown. Her usual ‘RBF,’ as the brunette in front of her would say.

“..Iz, you’re not..” Lyra seemed to struggle, as if she were speaking to try to convince herself rather than provide Ismene with consolation. “An idiot for trusting someone.”

Her delivery said otherwise.

Lyra seemed to catch it too, fumbling on her words as she stared at Ismene wide-eyed. “God, no, sorry, came out wrong. You— You didn’t know Shinku would.. do whatever stupid shit he did, okay? Don’t blame yourself for that. Boys suck.”

Ah. What was that phrase Shatel said? ‘Misogyny wins again?’ It was such a.. childish way to put her betrayal. And yet, it made the smallest bit of sense. It did bring a brief smile to her face, so maybe Shatel wasn’t the worst at comforting people, despite what she lets on.

Maybe it was the false security she felt around Shatel that made her so drawn into her comfort. Maybe it was her beauty; so casual that it was as captivating as a morning cup of tea, a favorite book, and a good fireplace. There was something about the brunette that made Ismene just.. give in. She had drawn herself too close to the flame, yet it didn’t sting like it had before. No, it was.. gentle. Blanketing her worries like a warm embrace; the kind you’d yearn for after a long day of work and stress.

A touch Ismene had yearned for since.. forever.

So, when Shatel gave her that look— one that told Ismene that she cared in a way that Shinku, Dracul, or any past ‘friend’ ever could— she caved. Maybe she’d regret it later like she had many times before, but it wasn’t fair of Shatel to tempt her with such.. ease. Like a siren, soothing her in such a way that she couldn’t help but let herself drown.

“I just..” Ismene breathed, low and rigid, “I don’t understand how he could just.. do that. To — To us. To him. To me.” She added on the bit about herself as more of an after thought. As if it were against some sort of rule for her to feel hurt. To feel betrayed. To feel— no, be— used.

..Perhaps Uchiyama was onto something back there during her nonsensical ranting. Well, was it truly nonsensical now that Ismene understood..? She really did take Uchiyama for granted.

Lyra didn’t say a word. She just nodded, waved her hand, and sat more comfortably in her seat. Despite being a siren, she couldn’t appear to be more real. Either she was the most clever of the bunch, or.. she wasn’t truly what Ismene made her out to be at all.

So, like any sailor drawn to a siren’s song, she strayed closer. Carried on.

“I— I defended him with.. so, so much of my will. I stuck by his side, no matter what stupid shit he had gotten himself into.” Ismene could feel her composure threatening to slip, opting to occupy her hands with the cuffs of her sleeves as a means to straighten out the wrinkles of her frustrations. “It was always.. ‘Shinku and Ismene.’ But— Did he ever see it that way at all? Or was it just Shinku?”

Ismene could really go for a glass of wine right now.

“Had— Had it always been ‘Just Shinku’? Or was he only clinging to me because I was the closest to Dracul? But— That’s stupid since Maiko was his replacement. So..” So, what? Why would he even bother with keeping their promise if he had buried it and started anew with Maiko? Why still stick around when their promise seemed to be so one-sided? If Maiko had been all that he had wanted, then what did Ismene even have to give? Was it for safety in numbers?

She hated how transactional this prison had become. Every turn feels like some elaborate chess game, with your death coming as soon as someone takes your king. It happens so quickly, that you don’t have any time to process your moves. Just pass the pawn forward, and hope it was a good enough move to make it another round.

Had Shatel made the right play? Did she do this purely out of obligation? That, if she didn’t, something might happen to one of her pawns?

..Ismene’s head hurt.

“..I thought I could— I could rely on him. Someone. Anyone. And he.. He just—“ Ismene’s voice shrunk barely above a whisper. “—He placed so much above that. Above— Above a promise I felt was stupid, but I kept it anyway! I saw it through, and—“

“Iz.”

Nobody’s ever said her name with such compassion and intimacy before. It was a.. cruel comparison, given the circumstance; Shatel sounded an awful lot like Uchiyama whispering Asuga’s name.

It left her feeling uneasy. Cared for, certainly, but in a foreign way. Like it would get to be too much if she indulged in it further.

Ismene lifted her head to meet Lyra’s gaze, stiffening as she returned the eye contact with such a soft look. Ismene didn’t deserve this. She didn’t deserve it after ridiculing Shatel, telling her to go cold turkey despite how reliant she was on her sedatives. Ismene knew how much Shatel needed them, and urged her to stop anyway. She tells her countless times a day how bad Ezekiel is for her, and she still comes to the library.

What did she do to ever deserve such kindness? Ismene’s cold. Bitter. Sardonic almost way too often to show how uncomfortable she ever is with her conditions. Nothing about her gave her the chance to receive that look of all looks from Lyra Shatel. So.. human. It almost looked like she was scared. Of all people, Shatel was afraid.

Afraid of what?

“You realize you’re not.. alone, right? Sure, you and Zeke have your differences. And, alright, I am pissed at you from time to time, but..” Lyra leaned forward, placing a cautious hand onto Ismene’s shoulder. “..You’re not by yourself. Ever. Shinku may have left, and guess what? That fucking sucks for him, because he just fumbled one of the baddest bitches

in this hellhole.” Despite how crass the joke was, Ismene couldn’t help but smile. Shatel had an.. interesting way with words. “Just.. stop talking like you have no one.”

Lyra’s breath hitched.

Her grip on Ismene’s shoulder tightened.

“Like.. Like you have nothing to— to live for. You.. You have to make it out of here. We have to make it out of here.”

Another promise.

Ismene shouldn’t accept promises anymore. Every promise she’s made during her time in the cold, concrete walls of the prison, had been broken one way or another. The people she held closest to her had all gone behind her back, abandoning her alongside each and every broken promise like lambs to the slaughter. If they kept it up, maybe Ismene would be next. Maybe nobody would care. They wouldn’t care for her death if there was nobody left that actually wanted her alive.

But Lyra’s face, her grip, her voice— God, that voice— said otherwise.

It was wrong to trust a siren. They lure you in just for their own goals; to provide themselves with a large, hearty meal. To feast upon fleets of men and bask in their new treasures after ransacking the ship dry. Once pleased, they’d return to the depths, parading around their new jewels until they eventually lost their shine; a matter of time until the cycle began anew.

Ismene was a fool for trusting people in her past. It had proved true for her entire life, up until now.

“..Okay.” Ismene whispered, wiping her tears from her eyes with the back of her palm.

“Yeah?” Lyra’s grip loosened.

Ismene wished it hadn’t. She wished this siren would engulf her whole. Take anything and everything, flaunting her about as she saw fit.

“..Yeah.” Ismene parroted, choked between a sob and a sniffle.

Lyra dragged her hand down Ismene’s shoulder, rubbing the side of her upper arm with slow, intricate strokes of her thumb. Each and every circle served as a gentle reminder of her promise. Of her being here. That Lyra wasn’t going anywhere.

For now.

Perhaps Ismene was selfish. If she was, she'd own it with pride. It’s not every day she got to have such an intimate moment with Shatel. So, like any other moth, she drew herself closer. Let herself succumb to the hypnotizing wisps for just a little while, collapsing forward and resting her forehead on Lyra’s shoulder as she cried. Her arms came to hold her in a gentle, yet awkward embrace. She couldn’t blame her. The two barely knew each other.

Strangely enough, Ismene felt like they had known each other for centuries. They had understood each other in a way many others hadn't, despite how.. limited their circles were. The two barely crossed paths anymore, given it was.. mostly on Ismene's fault.

Maybe that's why Lyra came.

To make amends. To show Ismene that she wanted her around. That, even though she was with Ezekiel all the time, Ismene still had a special place in her head. A small piece of Lyra, reserved only for times like these.

Now that she thought about it, they hadn't hung out one-on-one since..

Since.. Maiko's birthday party. Sharing a drink.

Ismene misses it, as selfish as it is to admit. People died the following day. A murder happened outside of that party. She created an opening for a murderer.

But all she could recall was how happy Lyra seemed.

Ismene could let herself indulge in Shatel for one night. Ezekiel was a grown man, capable of being without her touch for one night. Assuming they even.. rested the way Ismene was with her now. The thought left a burning pit in her stomach.

Ezekiel may have had Lyra most of the time, but he will never get to experience the bond she had shared with the brunette.

..She didn't know if she took pride or resentment over the fact.

End Notes

thank you for reading!! i have another work coming.. in truth these fics have been written since ch2 came out / basically every ante update but i was really cringe and didnt want to post them bc i was scared. but like. who cares being cringe is being free.

yes this is gonna be a yuri only account thank u /silly

uhm if u know me from discord.. no you dont.. im keeping my identity a secret shhhh

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